



UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
United States Patent and Trademark Office
Address: COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450
www.uspto.gov

APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/521,468	08/24/2005	Naohiko Uchiumi	264532US0PCT	2239
22850	7590	09/30/2009	EXAMINER	
OBLON, SPIVAK, MCCLELLAND MAIER & NEUSTADT, L.L.P. 1940 DUKE STREET ALEXANDRIA, VA 22314				THEODORE, MAGALI P
ART UNIT		PAPER NUMBER		
1791				
NOTIFICATION DATE		DELIVERY MODE		
09/30/2009		ELECTRONIC		

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

Notice of the Office communication was sent electronically on above-indicated "Notification Date" to the following e-mail address(es):

patentdocket@oblon.com
oblonpat@oblon.com
jgardner@oblon.com

Office Action Summary	Application No.	Applicant(s)	
	10/521,468	UCHIUMI ET AL.	
	Examiner	Art Unit	
	Magali P. Théodore	1791	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

1) Responsive to communication(s) filed on 17 September 2009.

2a) This action is **FINAL**. 2b) This action is non-final.

3) Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

4) Claim(s) 1-16 is/are pending in the application.

4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.

5) Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.

6) Claim(s) 1-16 is/are rejected.

7) Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.

8) Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

9) The specification is objected to by the Examiner.

10) The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) accepted or b) objected to by the Examiner.

Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).

Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).

11) The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

12) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).

a) All b) Some * c) None of:

- Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
- Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
- Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

1) Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)

2) Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)

3) Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____.

4) Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____.

5) Notice of Informal Patent Application

6) Other: _____.

DETAILED ACTION

The remarks filed September 17, 2009 were received.

The text of those sections of Title 35, U.S. Code not included in this action can be found in a prior Office action.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

Claims 1-13 and 16 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Kawahara et al. (2002/0028871 A1), henceforth **Kawahara 871**, in view of Ninomiya et al. (EP 1085028 A1), henceforth **Ninomiya**.

Regarding **claim 1**, step 1, Kawahara 871 teaches starting with an ethylene-vinyl alcohol (EVOH) copolymer solution (0012 lines 2-3) containing 50 parts by weight or more of alcohol with respect to 100 parts by weight of EVOH (0012 lines 5-6). The alcohol's boiling point is no higher than 100 C (0012 lines 6-7). Kawahara 871 teaches putting this solution into a vessel (0012 lines 8-9). Kawahara 871 teaches putting the solution in contact with water vapor inside the vessel (0012 lines 9-10) to let the alcohol out with the water vapor (0012 line 10) and then discharging from the vessel an EVOH hydrous composition containing 0 to 10 parts by weight of said alcohol (0012 lines 12-13) and 10 to 1000 parts by weight of water (0012 lines 13-14) with respect to 100 parts by weight of the EVOH (0012 lines 14-15).

Regarding claim 1, step 2, Kawahara 871 teaches cutting the resulting copolymer (0017 lines 2-4) in a molten state (melt, 0017 lines 8-9) to make pellets (0017 line 2).

Regarding claim 1, step 3, Kawahara 871 teaches drying these pellets to reduce their water content (0076 lines 1-4). Kawahara 871 does not teach using a dryer. However, Ninomiya teaches using a dryer (page 7 lines 3-5) to dry the pellets. Therefore it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to combine the use of a dryer with the steps taught Kawahara 871 in order to achieve predictable results with a reasonable expectation of success.

Regarding claim 1, steps 4-5, Kawahara 871 does not teach melt-kneading the pellets from step 3 and pelletizing again. However, Ninomiya teaches pelletizing an EVOH composition (page 5 lines 56-57), drying those pellets (page 6 lines 54-55), melt-kneading them in an extruder (page 7 lines 14-16) and then pelletizing again (page 7 line 27). Therefore it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to combine steps 4 and five with the steps taught by Kawahara 871 in order to achieve predictable results with a reasonable expectation of success.

Regarding **claim 2**, Kawahara 871 teaches that the EVOH composition is 3 to 70 mol % ethylene and at least 80 mol % saponified (0016 lines 2-5).

Regarding **claim 3**, Kawahara 871 uses methanol as the alcohol (0016 lines 1-2).

Regarding **claim 5**, Kawahara 871 teaches introducing the EVOH solution continuously (continuous, 0050 line 8) into a tower vessel (column, 0050 line 9) and bringing the EVOH solution contact with the water vapor in the vessel (0051 lines 1-3).

Regarding **claim 6**, Kawahara 871 teaches introducing the EVOH solution from the top of the tower (0051 lines 5-6) and the water from the bottom (0015 lines 5-7).

The two fluids meet in a countercurrent flow (0051 line 8). Then the EVOH hydrous composition comes out the bottom of the vessel and the water and alcohol come out the top (0051 lines 9-12).

Regarding **claim 8**, Kawahara 871 teaches washing the pellets from step 2 to rinse off a saponification catalyst residue (0068 lines 5-6). Kawahara 871 teaches drying these pellets (0076 lines 1-4). Kawahara 871 does not teach using a dryer. However, Ninomiya teaches using a dryer (page 7 lines 3-5) to dry the pellets. Therefore it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to combine the use of a dryer with the steps taught Kawahara 871 in order to achieve predictable results with a reasonable expectation of success.

Regarding **claim 9**, Kawahara 871 teaches immersing the pellets from step 2 in an aqueous solution containing a carboxylic acid, a boron compound, a phosphoric acid compound (phosphate), an alkali metal salt or an alkaline earth metal salt before drying (0070 lines 6-11). Kawahara 871 teaches drying these pellets (0076 lines 1-4). Kawahara 871 does not teach using a dryer. However, Ninomiya teaches using a dryer (page 7 lines 3-5) to dry the pellets. Therefore it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to combine the use of a dryer with the steps taught Kawahara 871 in order to achieve predictable results with a reasonable expectation of success.

Regarding **claim 10**, Kawahara 871 teaches drying at 100 C (0082 line 8).

Regarding **claim 11**, Kawahara 871 teaches reducing the water content to less than 10 % (up to 1 %, 0076 line 3).

Regarding **claim 12**, Kawahara 871 does not teach step 4. However, Ninomiya teaches melt kneading the EVOH copolymer such that its water weight after melt-kneading is less than 1 % (page 9 lines 39-41). Therefore it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to combine this step with the steps taught by Kawahara 871 in order to achieve predictable results with a reasonable expectation of success.

Regarding **claim 13**, Kawahara 871 does not teach step 4. However, Ninomiya teaches removing water from the molten resin in the extruder (page 7 lines 14-16). Therefore it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to combine this step with the steps taught by Kawahara 871 in order to achieve predictable results with a reasonable expectation of success.

Regarding **claim 16**, Kawahara 871 does not teach step 5. However, Ninomiya discloses cutting the pellets of step 5 after cooling (p 12 ln 36). Therefore it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to combine this step with those taught by Kawahara 871 in order to achieve predictable results with a reasonable expectation of success.

Claims 14-15 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over **Kawahara 817** in view of **Ninomiya** as applied to claim 1 above, and further in view of Kawahara et al. (EP 1072616 A2), henceforth **Kawahara 616**.

Regarding **claims 14**, Kawahara 871 does not teach step 4. However, Kawahara 616 teaches adding a carboxylic acid, a boron compound, a phosphoric acid compound, an alkali metal salt or an alkaline earth metal salt in the extruder as well as

in the washing fluid (0026) because it is difficult to get the additive's concentration right when adding it only in the washing step (0064 lines 42-45). Therefore it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to add the additive(s) in the melt-kneading step because Kawahara 616 teaches doing so for better control of the additive's concentration.

Regarding **claim 15**, Kawahara 871 teaches immersing the pellets from step 2 in an aqueous solution containing a carboxylic acid, a boron compound, a phosphoric acid compound (phosphate), an alkali metal salt or an alkaline earth metal salt before drying (0070 lines 6-11). Kawahara 871 does not teach step 4. However, Kawahara 616 teaches adding a carboxylic acid, a boron compound, a phosphoric acid compound, an alkali metal salt or an alkaline earth metal salt in the extruder as well as in the washing fluid (0026) because it is difficult to get the additive's concentration right when adding it only in the washing step (0064 lines 42-45). Therefore it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to add the additive(s) in the melt-kneading step because Kawahara 616 teaches doing so for better control of the additive's concentration.

Response to Arguments

Applicant's arguments with respect to claims 1-16 have been considered but are moot in view of the new ground(s) of rejection.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Magali P. Théodore whose telephone number is (571)

270-3960. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday through Friday 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. EST.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Christina A. Johnson can be reached on (571) 272-1176. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

/Magali P. Théodore/
Examiner, Art Unit 1791

/Christina Johnson/
Supervisory Patent Examiner, Art Unit 1791

Application/Control Number: 10/521,468
Art Unit: 1791

Page 8